

Message Text

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ACTION AF-18

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USIA-15 EB-11 COME-00 AGR-20 OMB-01 AID-20 TRSE-00

RSR-01 /165 W

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R 150925Z AUG 73

FM AMEMBASSY RABAT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9847

INFO AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMCONSUL CASABLANCA

AMCONSUL TANGIER

C O N F I D E N T I A L RABAT 3762

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT PFOR MO

SUBJ: FRENCH AMBASSADOR DISCUSSES EXPROPRIATION BY MOROCCAN
GOVERNMENT OF FOREIGN-HELD AGRICULTURAL LAND

REF: RABAT 3482 AND 3508

1. SUMMARY. FRENCH AMBASSADOR OPTIMISTIC ABOUT
COMPENSATION FOR THIS YEAR'S CROP BUT PESSIMISTIC ABOUT
PAYMENT FOR VALUE OF LAND; FORESEES GOM ISSUING TWO MORE
LISTS TO BRING TOTAL OF LANDS SEIZED TO 300,000 HECTARES;
BELIEVES THERE WILL BE DRASTIC DROP IN AGRICULTURAL
PRODUCTION AS RESULT TAKEOVER. END SUMMARY
2. ON AUGUST 12, I HAD LONG CONVERSATION WITH FRENCH
AMBASSADOR LEBEL ON TAKEOVER OF FOREIGN-OWNED AGRICULTURAL
LAND BY MOROCCAN AUTHORITIES AS ANNOUNCED BY KING HASSAN ON
JULY 27. FOLLOWING ARE MAJOR POINTS.
3. COMPENSATION FOR THIS YEAR'S CROP - AMBASSADOR OPTIMISTIC
THAT AGREEMENT WOULD BE REACHED WITH GOM WHEREBY FRENCH COLONS
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WOULD BE PAID FOR THIS YEAR'S CROP AND PERMITTED TRANSFER PROCEEDS

TO FRANCE.

4. LEBEL LESS OPTIMISTIC BUT NOT WITHOUT HOPE CONCERNING COMPENSATION FOR AGRICULTURAL EQUIPMENT AND ANIMALS BELONGING TO COLONS. NEGOTIATIONS ON THIS POINT VERY DIFFICULT.

5. RE COMPENSATION FOR VALUE OF LAND ITSELF, LEBEL WAS FRANKLY PESSIMISTIC. SAID MOROCCANS WERE INSISTING GOF COMPENSATE COLONS BUT THAT OUT OF QUESTION BECAUSE OF REPERCUSSIONS IN SIMILAR SITUATIONS IN WHICH FRANCE INVOLVED IN OTHER COUNTRIES.

6. AMBASSADOR HOPEFUL AGREEMENT WOULD BE REACHED IN "HUMANITARIAN" CASES, INVOLVING AGED PERSONS POSSESSING SMALL AMOUNTS OF LAND AND REALLY UNABLE TO RE-ESTABLISH THEMSELVES IN FRANCE; THEY WOULD BE PERMITTED RETAIN OWNERSHIP OF THEIR LAND FOR REST OF THEIR LIVES.

7. AMBASSADOR SAID THAT, ALTHOUGH HE VIEWED MOROCCAN MOVE IN ITS HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE, COLONS NATURALLY DID NOT, AND MANY WERE EXTREMELY BITTER. HOWEVER, MOST LARGE LANDOWNERS HAD MADE HANDSOME PROFITS IN MOROCCO AND HAD DONE MUCH BETTER THAN THEY COULD HAVE FROM FARMING IN FRANCE. HE CONCERNED LESS ABOUT THESE PEOPLE THAN ABOUT SMALL LANDOWNERS. NONETHELESS, WAS PAINFUL FOR HIM TO PRESIDE OVER WHAT WOULD AMOUNT TO LIQUIDATION OF TRADITIONAL FRENCH PRESENCE IN MOROCCO. HE LOOKED FORWARD, HOWEVER, TO DAY WHEN FRENCH-MOROCCAN RELATIONS WOULD NOT BE HINDERED BY TWIN PROBLEMS OF COLON LANDS AND THE LARGE UN-MOROCCANIZED FRENCH FINANCIAL AND COMMERCIAL PRESENCE HERE.

8. LEBEL SAID THAT HE BELIEVED TWO MORE LISTS OF PROPERTIES TO BE TAKEN OVER WOULD BE ISSUED BY GOM, ONE IN LATE AUGUST AND SECOND IN SEPTEMBER. ANTICIPATED THAT TOTAL AMOUNT OF FOREIGN-HELD LANDS TO BE TAKEN OVER MIGHT RISE AS HIGH AS 300,000 HECTARES.

9. LEBEL SAID HE CONVINCED THAT AS RESULT OF TAKEOVER THERE WOULD BE DRASTIC DROP IN LEVEL OF MOROCCAN AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION. ESTIMATED THIS WOULD RUN AS HIGH AS EQUIVALENT OF TWO PER CENT OF MOROCCO'S GNP.

10. I DISCUSSED SAME SUBJECT AUGUST 13 WITH YOUSSEF BEL ABBES,
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MOROCCAN AMBASSADOR TO FRANCE. HE SAID HE THOUGHT GOM COULD NOT PERMIT EVEN TRANSFER OF PROCEEDS RECEIVED BY COLONS FOR THIS YEAR'S CROP WITHOUT ASSISTANCE FROM GOF. FRENCH EMBASSY AND GOF BEING CORRECT IN THIS SITUATION, HE SAID, BUT NOT COLONS, WHO WERE STIRRING UP TROUBLE IN PARIS AND IN FRENCH PRESS. THOUGHT FRENCH SETTLERS SHOULD CONSIDER THEMSELVES LUCKY THAT THEY HAD BEEN PERMITTED TO MAKE HUGE PROFITS FOR 17 YEARS AND HAD NOT LONG AGO BEEN ABRUPTLY DEPRIVED OF THEIR LANDS WITHOUT

COMPENSATION AS HAD OCCURED IN ALGERIA AND TUNISIA.
ROCKWELL

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